

Dear Chairman Powell and Commissioners,

As a citizen who wants to be informed about the political and electoral issues that affect my life, I am greatly disappointed by the lack of informative television programming.

Local public affairs programming is virtually non-existent--constituting less than one half of 1% of all local programming. More than half of news broadcasts prior to the 2002 elections did not include a single campaign story. Our democracy is at risk when many Americans don't know basic facts about the candidates or the issues, as was the case in the 2000 elections.

Since broadcasters have clearly failed in their obligation to serve the public interest, the FCC should define meaningful public interest requirements that include local civic and electoral affairs programming. At a minimum, broadcasters should air three hours per week of local civic and electoral affairs programming, with at least two hours devoted to substantive election coverage in the six weeks prior to Election Day.

As the elections approach, a well-functioning democracy demands that citizens have access to a diversity of opinions and voices on the choices confronting us. I am very concerned with the deterioration of the democratic principle of an informed citizenry. This country cannot afford the narrow access to information that has become so prevalent and any further diminuation of voices by the concentration of power in the hands of a few large Media corporations would I believe undermine and finally destroy this country. This issue must be addressed. The coverage of candidates and issues is extremely inadequate and coverage must be set by government guidelines.

Sincerely, Sophia Torelli

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